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Dialectic and Dialogue in Plato: Revisiting the Image of "Socrates-as-Teacher" in the Hermeneutic Pursuit of Authentic *Paideia*

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(NB: First draft of paper)

Introduction:

The Socratic method of pedagogy as described and implemented by Adler in the *Paideia Project* (1984) emerges from a view of Socrates that runs counter to Plato's image of Socrates as presented within the dialogues, most specifically the "early" dialogues deemed "aporetic" in nature. Within Adler's view, Socrates represents the supreme example of what an educator should be like. "The Socratic mode of teaching," states Adler (1984), is a method of pedagogy that brings ideas to birth by means of "asking questions, by leading discussions, by helping students to raise their minds up from a state of understanding and appreciating less to a state of understanding and appreciating more" (p. 29). The "Socratic method" in education, which presupposes the view of *Socrates-as-teacher*, "refers to someone who teaches by asking his or her students lading questions – compelling them to think their way through to the correct understanding of the subject matter" (Brickhouse & Smith, 1997, p. 3). There are many troublesome aspects within the image of Adler's *Socrates-as-teacher* model, not the least of which is that it presupposes two very distinct, and, I contend, incorrect assumptions about the Socrates of Plato's dialogues.

First, the *Socrates-as-teacher* model ignores the legitimacy of Socrates' claims of ignorance regarding the wisdom of the virtues, and interprets him as *ironically* masquerading as a co-participant in the process of the dialectic, i.e., Socrates is in the possession (*echein*) of knowledge, and this locates Socrates at a hierarchical (epistemological) distance from the interlocutor as one who is superior in his possession of knowledge. Secondly, it wrongly presupposes that Socrates already knows where he wants to lead the student and does so by framing a series of pointed questions, which if answered correctly, will lead the student down what appears to be the path of authentic "self-discovery," when in fact it was a destination that Socrates was aware of in advance of the questioning. As Brickhouse and Smith (1997) argue, "So-called Socratic teachers typically ask their questions and lead their students to the right answers precisely because they *do* know their subjects, and, hence, *do* know the right answers to their questions" (p. 3). Gero (1989) pulls no punches in her acrid description and critique of the type of Socratic teaching envisioned by Adler, blatantly labeling it "phony" and "pretentious," this is because the

Socratic teacher raises a question and invites the class to participate in a rational and democratic exchange of ideas in search of truth. But, in fact, the teacher already knows the "correct" answer, and the democratic discussion becomes an exercise in psyching-out the teacher. It often boils down not to what students see,

¹In Platonic scholarship, it is also the case that this view of *Socrates-as-teacher* and philosopher of the forms (*eidai*) emerges from interpretations of Plato that wrongly (1) take the education of the guardians and philosopher-kings as presented in the *Republic* to be Plato's one and true formalized philosophy of education, and (2) view Plato as a "doctrinal" philosopher, i.e., through Socrates Plato espouses and defends a coherent and developing systematic metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. I shall address each of these issues in turn as I progress through the paper. Philosophers who argue against this above two-pronged interpretation of Plato include, but are not limited to, Gadamer (1978, 1984, 1989), Gonzalez (2000), Hyland (2005), and Fried (2006).

but to what they guess they are expected to see. Since classes tend to climax at the discovery of the correct answer, little time is left for analyzing and testing the soundness of that answer except within the matrix of questions by which the teacher has lead students to it in the first place (p. 37).

As argued by Brickhouse and Smith (1997), "Socrates, as Plato depicts him, is not a teacher at all; he is a seeker after moral wisdom who engages others to engage in the same search" (p. 4), and indeed Socrates expresses this fact in the Apology, wherein he explicitly tells the court, "I have never been anyone's teacher" (Plato, 1997, 33a). Against this erroneous educational model of Socrates-asteacher, I defend a view that embraces the following claims as related to a unique vision of Socrates and the Greek notion of paideia that Plato endorses with the hope of formalizing ways in which this renewed vision of Socrates and the practice of dialectic might contribute to a unique understanding of what a real "Socratic education" might entail: (1) Socrates is in fact not a teacher in the traditional sense of the pedagogue, although learning (education) within Plato's dialogues is undoubtedly, and perhaps in a more pure sense that we can conceive, taking place; (2) the form of knowledge that emerges from the dialogues is of a distinct and unique variety, namely, it is a form of non-propositional knowledge, or "understanding," which is difficult to grasp and impossible to possess in a mode of certainty, which might allow it to be passed along efficiently to others, as from teacher to student; and (3) the dialogues of Plato unfold through a process of hermeneutic interpretation, and because of the nature of hermeneutic practice, the dialogues are thus constructive and participatory, wherein Socrates and his interlocutors are actually co-learners and co-educators, thus there is a trans-formative aspect that might be understood in terms of Bildung, or what I will argue for, an authentic notion of paideia, or education. ³

1. The "Pursuit" of Philosophical Understanding: Socrates as *Zetetic* Philosopher

In the *Republic* Plato develops a detailed interpretation of the ideal type of formal education that is best suited for a flourishing city-state. This programmatic view of education includes musical or liberal arts instruction, physical exercise, mathematics, and dialectic for the potential philosopher rulers. The poetry and the narrative tales that were best suited for instruction included only those tales that inculcated the individual in the knowledge and ways of justice, courage, and *sophrosune*, Plato incorporates the *Cave Allegory* in the attempt to show the reader what a progressive philosophical education is like, as the individual moves from a state of being uneducated (*apaideusia*) to a higher state of being educated (*paideia*), along with highlighting the effect this "education" has on the soul, which culminates, through the dialectic method, in the knowledge of the form (*eidos*) of the Good, a truth that transcends perceived reality and is ultimately the "cause of all that is correct and beautiful in everything," and "in the intelligible realm it controls and provides truth and understanding, so that anyone who is to act sensibly in private or public must see it" (Plato, 1997, 1135, 517c). The philosopher rulers of the city-state can

² To be consistent throughout, I am avoiding such terms as knowledge (*episteme*), wisdom (*sophia*), intuition (*noeisis*), and "human wisdom," as Socrates' calls philosophical wisdom in the *Apology* (20e), which is clearly a form of insight into the severely limited nature of human understanding when compared to that of the gods, when referencing the form of non-propositional insight that Socratic philosophy manifests. Rather, following Gonzalez (1999), I'll refer to the philosophical knowledge, or insight into the Being of virtue, emerging from the dialectic, as simply "understanding." In response to doctrinal interpreters who want to equate philosophical knowledge with the type of sure and certain knowledge we find described by Descartes, Gonzalez states: "The word *episteme* as used in Plato's dialogues should be translated not as 'knowledge' but as 'understanding.' In other words, Platonic *episteme* is not 'justified true belief'; instead, its meaning is closer to that of our word 'understanding'" (177).

³ This interpretation of Platonic dialogue-dialectic as "hermeneutic" in nature is taken up from Gadamer (1989) and further developed in its role as educative: What characterizes Platonic dialogue, "in contrast with the rigid form of statements that demand to be set down in writing, is precisely this: that in dialogue spoken language – in the process of question and answer, giving and taking, talking at cross purposes and seeing each other's point - performs the communication of meaning that, with respect to the written tradition, is the task of hermeneutics," and Plato himself "manifests the hermeneutic phenomenon in a specific way" (pp. 361-362).

then draw inspiration to rule with authentically good intensions in light of the supreme knowledge of the Good.

As stated, this knowledge of the Good-in-itself is grasped through the dialectic method, and so I want to briefly draw out the differences, by incorporating a commonly held interpretation of Plato's philosophy, between the form of the "dialectic" in the "aporetic" dialogues and the "dialectic" as it is described by Socrates in the *Republic*, where it is introduced as the most crucial element of the philosopher's curriculum.⁴ It is possible to state that "aporetic" dialogues such as the *Lysis, Theatetus, Charmides,* and *Laches* are more "negative" in their truth-function, but no less educative for that fact, for they two, according to certain scholars, are able to produce results in the form of true and valid propositions. These "aporetic" dialogues take the form of the *elenchus,* wherein the process of refuting the opponent's position opens a context for "negative argumentation," which implies that truth will remain after the false beliefs have been examined and thoroughly refuted. For example, Taylor (2001) adopts this view and explains that in the *Charmides,* although the dialogue ends with no satisfactory philosophical account validating the *episteme* of the virtue in question, *sophrosune,* i.e., it has ended in the "waylessness" of the *aporia,* and

the real, as distinct from the dramatic, conclusion has already been reached in the suggestion that what is really needed for the direction of life is the knowledge of the good, and this knowledge is something quite different from any recognized special "sciences" or "arts" (57, my emphasis).

Contrarily, the dialectic, as explained by Socrates in the *Republic*, as it is to be incorporated into the education of the philosopher-kings, no longer represents the practice of the elenchus, rather it has a "positive" function and is a form of dialogue incorporating arguments in order to achieve a sure and true understanding of reality (Being). In this work the dialectic is a form of testing the explanations given for how and why things are the way they are. As Peters (2000) states, "Dialectic is a progressively more synoptic ascent, via a series of 'positions' [hypotheses], until an ultimate is reached" (p. 36). For Socrates, the dialectic is the philosophical method par excellence in achieving knowledge of the Goodin-itself (auto to agathon), by distinguishing "in an account the form (eidos) of the good from all else," the account produced by the dialectic can "survive all refutation" (Plato, 1997, 1115, 532a-b). Application of this method of questioning to hypothetical conclusions leads to a reasoned account of the ultimate knowledge of first principles and the form (eidos) of the Good. Both of these views of the dialectic in Plato, which might be linked to the classification of Plato, in education circles, as idealist,⁵ carry with them the following two incorrect assumptions about Socrates as an echonic philosophical figure, which identify him with being cut from the identical mold as that of the "philosopher-kings," i.e., as a possessor and teacher of philosophical truths. As highlighted by Gonzalez (1997), the following crucial themes will be developed and detailed as this essay progresses:

The first assumption is that the knowledge which philosophy strives to attain is the knowledge of propositions. The characterization of knowledge as propositional means not simply that we can speak

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⁴ To draw this distinction in stages of Plato's development of the dialectic, as I have done above, between early "negative function" *elenchus* and middle, more mature, "positive function" stages of the dialectic as a method is referred to as the "developmentalist" view of Plato's philosophy (Gonzalez, 2001; Hyland, 2004). "Developmentalists" present a view of Plato as a systematic philosopher, "the system," however, "is now understood as having been subject to revision throughout Plato's life, it is still a system which is considered to have been the aim of Plato's philosophical activity" (Gonzalez, 2001, p. 4). I am developing an interpretation herein based on my reading of "Continental" Platonic scholars that runs counter to this line of thought.

⁵ In the philosophy of education, those embracing the *idealist* reading of Plato, trace his authentic education to the education of the "Philosopher-kings" and Philosopher-queens," i.e., his formalized notion of state education. The dialectic method is employed and is capable of producing definitive results. Educators (Ozmon & Craver, 1990) critical of idealism state that its absolutist notion "of a finished and absolute universe waiting to be discovered," which has "hindered progress in science and the creation of new ideas and processes. If one accepts the concept of absolute ideas, it is not possible to beyond these ideas without questioning and doubting their absoluteness" (39).

about the objects of philosophy, but rather we can do so without profound distortion [...] It must be the case that we can not only form propositions about fundamental principles of reality, but also that these propositions can express these principles as *they really are* [...] The second assumption is that philosophical *method* is subordinate to, and terminates in, some final result. Apart from the method of inquiry, a system exists which is thought to be the end (in both senses of the word) of the method (pp. 7-9).

In this paper, I am working from an interpretation of the "Socratic-method" that differs drastically from the aforementioned forms of "dialectic," one in which the method of questioning expresses a sense of ignorance against the backdrop of an "understanding" that allows for questions to be given form, all the while embracing the radical finitude bound up with all human efforts to make sense of the world. This form of the dialectic is at work in the "aporetic" dialogues (Gonzalez 1998), the *Republic* (Fried 2006), and the *Meno*, as I will outline below, because I think that this latter dialogue presents a nice distinction between Socrates *as* teacher and Socrates *as* co-participant in the process of attempting to reveal the truth or Being of virtue, to provide some answer to the "What-is-X?" question. Gonzalez (1998) describes the aforementioned Socratic method in terms that will be later elucidated by turning to Plato's description of truth and the dialectic method in the *Seventh Letter*. It is possible to understand this notion of dialectic in the "aporetic" dialogues as being at once "positive and constructive despite the pack of propositional results," and this distinct form of "dialectic is itself in some sense a 'solution,' rather than a mere tool for arriving at a solution" (10). Gonzalez goes on to add that this form of dialectic described is superior, according to Plato, to the hypothetical method, "which is so admired by modern interpreters for its modest ability to deduce propositions" (10).

The teacher must possess knowledge, that is, know that something is the case and be able to give a reasoned account of how it is true in order to impart it or lead others to it. In addition, the teacher has mastered the method to be employed in order to secure knowledge. He must then be able to instruct the young in the proper practice of the dialectic method in order to bring the student to a state of enlightenment regarding the first principles. In the Meno Socrates appears to be precisely this type of teacher, for this view of Socrates-as-teacher is most often justified through a standard interpretation of Plato's dialogue, the *Meno*, wherein Socrates leads Meno's young slave to the knowledge of Euclidean geometry through a series of questions and statements designed specifically to enlighten and awaken the boy to the knowledge already present within his soul. However, I propose that if we revisit the dialogue we will note that there are two forms of "dialectic" transpiring, and I argue that the dialogue might be viewed as a "positive" dialectic set within the overarching context of an "aporetic" dialectic, the type of dialectic described above by Gonzalez (1998), concerned ultimately with the question of virtue. The first dialectic represents Adler's (1984) and the idealists' vision of the Socratic method, or "Socrates-asteacher," who takes Meno's slave boy through a geometry lesson, and although the boy has no prior knowledge of mathematics, through a series of leading questions, is able to solve the problem. The second form of dialectic deals with the questions of not only whether or not virtue is teachable, but more importantly, the question of what virtue is, or the "What-is-X?" question. With respect to this second form of dialectic, the final responses to whether or not virtue can be taught are not only unsatisfactory they are confused: this is because no agreeable definition is provided in response to the perennial Socratic question, "What is virtue?"

The method employed by Socrates in his encounter with the slave has the following characteristics: (1) it is a method that ends when the desired results are produced; (2) it presupposes that Socrates already has the answer he is seeking; (3) it unfolds in a *teleological* manner toward the end of true knowledge; and (4) it deals with a form of knowledge that is different than the knowledge, or "understanding," associated with the virtues as conceived by Socrates. Despite the fact that a rote transmission of knowledge is not occurring, by means of a didactic practice, this form of dialectic has the hallmark characteristics of the teacher-pupil relationship in learning. Socrates in advance was in possession of the geometric relations that existed in relation to the various parts of the figures, and it is still a teaching through questioning and not an instance of the co-participatory endeavor of actively pursuing knowledge through question and refutation, which brings us to the second form of dialectic,

concerned with defining virtue, and it is here that we witness Socrates explicitly refusing numerous times to answer to the title of "teacher." As Nehamas (1985) suggests, as opposed the reducing Socrates' claims of ignorance to examples of Socratic irony, to the incorporation of a mere literary trope, it is on this point that "we should take Socrates very seriously, if rather liberally, when he insists that he does not teach anyone anything" (19). Brickhouse and Smith (1994) also make a case for the authenticity of Socratic ignorance, and trace it to Socrates' inability to secure sure and certain knowledge, or "true wisdom," of virtue, for as they reason, "neither [Socrates] nor anyone else he has ever questioned has knowledge of virtue" (34).

When Meno's initial talk of the many different ways that virtue manifests (e.g., virtue is one thing for a man and another thing for a woman, and yet another for both young boys and girls) is undermined because Socrates seeks the *eidos*, of form of virtue, Meno attempts a second definition, and this too fails Socrates' test. In the exchange following Meno's frustration (the *aporia*), we encounter an authentic instance Socratic ignorance in the *Meno*, for Meno becomes exhausted with Socrates' questioning he states that Socrates, in a shrewd and beguiling manner, possesses the power of a "broad-torpedo fish" because Socrates stings and numbs interlocutors as part of his unique method of dialectic instruction. This analogy gives the surface impression that Socrates is in possession of knowledge and his teaching strategy is designed to confuse or confound the pupil before finally revealing the knowledge that he was holding up his sleeve, as within the aforementioned example of the "geometry lesson." However, this is indeed not the case, and Socrates assures Meno of this when stating that he does not possess sure and certain knowledge of virtue, and further, that the pursuit of such knowledge must be carried out in terms of a joint educative venture, *skepsasthai kai suzetetesai* (to examine and seek together), in participatory learning:

Now if the torpedo fish is itself numb and so makes others numb, then I resemble it, but not otherwise, for I myself do not have the answer when I perplex others, but I am more perplexed than anyone when I cause perplexity in others. So now I do not know what virtue is; perhaps knew before you contacted me, but now you are certainly like one who does not know. Nevertheless, I want to examine and seek together with you what it may be (Plato, 1997, 879, 80c).

Socrates' claims to ignorance also appear in the *Republic*, where Socrates denies numerous times that he is in possession of the knowledge of "justice." In dialogue with Thrasymachus, regarding "injustice being more profitable than justice," Socrates states the following regarding the discussion of justice in Book I: "Hence, the result of the discussion, as far as I'm concerned, is that I know nothing" (Plato, 1997, p. 998, 354c). It is indeed difficult to conceive of an educator making such statements to students about his utter lack of knowledge, as does Socrates when pressed to speak on the nature of virtue: It is impossible, Socrates reasons, for someone to give an answer "when he doesn't know it and doesn't claim to know it" (Plato, 1997, p. 982. 337e). It is extremely troubling that Socrates would utter such things in the very dialogue wherein he is outlining what appears to be the archetypal, programmatic education for the ideal city-state. Fried (2006) takes up this issue in his reading of Plato, which includes a reinterpretation of the Socratic dialectic and the view of Socrates as teacher and possessor of philosophical truth, all of which emerge from a unique reading of the *Cave Allegory*. Fried draws a crucial distinction between what he terms *zetetic* philosophy and *echonic* philosophy, and he associates Socrates, as against many traditional interpretations, with the former type of cautiously skeptical philosophy. ⁶

⁶ As mentioned, scholars who read Plato as a "doctrinal" thinker tend to classify him as an "echonic" thinker who philosophizes from within a system and adopts a view of truth in which *aletheia*, as original dis-closedness, is subordinated to the truth as propositional, truth as "idea," and Fried (2006) is critical of such readings. One such reading emerges from Heidegger's philosophy. As Fried points out: "This distinction at work in the *Republic* between zetetic and echonic philosophy affects the whole metaphysical-ontological-political-ethical-pedagogical teaching of Books 6 and 7, comprising the sun as an image of the good, the divided line as an image for the articulation of Being, and the parable of the cave: it takes on a different meaning depending on which account of the nature of philosophy you think is the right one. Heidegger and his descendants have accepted

According to Fried (2006), this notion I have introduced and outlined, in terms of Socrates as coparticipant in the learning process, as eschewing the moniker of "teacher," represents the view that Socrates is a "zetetic skeptic," and the "term derives from the Greek, zetein, meaning to search, to seek. Philosophy for Socrates is a searching, a seeking, a yearning – an eros – for wisdom" (p. 162). This is not to imply that Socrates is a Phyrrhonist skeptic, endorsing and enacting a radical nihilistic form of skepticism, for Socrates does offer arguments, or "Logous," in defense of his claims, for Socrates is always prepared "rationally to defend and criticize his own intimations, as need be" (Fried, 2006, p. 163). However, the interpretation of Socrates as a zetetic philosopher is antithetic to the philosophical ideal of the philosopher-kings that Socrates envisions, who know have grasped true reality, and these are clearly the types of rulers who should lead the city-state in all that is good and true. The Philosopher-kings, according to Fried (2006), are "echonic philosophers (from the Greek, echein, to have, to hold)," for they alone "possess the truth" (164). Importantly, the philosopher-kings accomplish what Socrates, the zetetic skeptic, cannot, namely, they

know the forms of justice and virtue; they have seen the good in its full glory and can understand and apply it without mediating metaphors such as Socrates' sun or divided line. To know such things is to understand fully what is best for human beings, just as to know how the body works is to understand when an operation should be performed (164, emphasis in original).

Fried (2006) makes the observation, which is also similarly found in other "continental" readings of the Platonic dialogues (Gadamer, 1984; Zuckert, 2005; Hyland, 2006), that Socrates does not attempt to classify himself as an echonic philosopher, he does not make the claim that he is like the philosopherkings he is envisioning. Importantly, "Plato does not represent [Socrates] as the type of philosopher that the internal argument of the Republic establishes as paradigmatic" (Fried, 2006, p. 164). The distinction between zetetic and echonic philosophy has crucial implications for the way in which Plato's metaphysics, politics, and ethics are conceived and understood, and for the purpose of this essay it influences (and skews) the view of education, which includes our conception of the "ideal" teacher, that we embrace as it is represented in the Allegory of the Cave. On the surface, it is tempting to apply in a traditional manner the echonic understanding of philosophy to it, for it appears in Book VII in terms of representing the authentic unfolding of the philosopher-kings' proper education, for the "ability to grasp the real in all its articulations is what both enables and entitles the echonic philosophers to rule" (Fried, 2006, p. 165). Succinctly, an echonic, and hence traditional and doctrinal reading of the allegory might be imagined as unfolding within the following three moments: (1) the "turning" away from the shadows; (2) the "turning" toward the light of the upper realm and the ascension out of the subterranean realm of the cave; and (3) the "turning" toward the direct light of the sun along with subsequent return to the cave, with truth in tow, in order to educate.

What might a *zetetic* reading of the allegory look like? Fried (2006) offers the following interpretation, where the three moments are mirrored in what is best described as a process that does not end with the ultimate knowledge of the forms, and specifically, the form of the Good, but rather in terms of a dynamic and ever-unfolding process of inquiry which is both critical in a negative and positive manner, and unfolds with the understanding, grounded in the acceptance of human limits and finitude, that philosophical inquiry will always fall short of sure and true knowledge, but nevertheless, holds the potential to lead to the growth and development of those who participate in the search for philosophical understanding. It is possible to understand what Socrates states about the nature of real education based on the limited model of *zetetic* philosophy, as a process whereby there occurs a "turning around of the soul" back to itself in an enlightened manner (Plato, p. 997, 518d). Fried (2006) outlines the three moments of the *zetetic* model, which mirrors the *echonic* model in the following passage:

the traditional view that Socrates and Plato cleave to the echonic model of philosophy: Platonism is a *theory*, or more to the point, a *doctrine*, and a decisive one for the West, of how philosophy may come into the possession of the truth [...] The cave parable then describes how one may ascend the divided line by correct representations of reality [via the dialectic]; this then is Plato's conception of truth" (164-165, emphasis in original).

So, we have three moments in the zetetic journey: the liberation from the bonds (deconstruction), the ascent upward (preconstruction), and the return to the cave (reconstruction). All three moments are necessary for the full expression of human freedom (167).

Prior to unpacking this quotation for the reader, the question must be raised, if the zetetic model is the authentic vision and practice of Socratic, and of course, Platonic philosophy, why does Plato present, and beyond, require two philosophical models in the Republic? Fried's (2006) rejoinder is that one is a authentic model, or better, imitation, for the practice of the philosophical dialectical process and the other is an unrealizable "ideal," which emerges through the Socratic use of imagery, imagination, and mythos, rather than a Logous proper. However, this is not to indicate that the echonic model should be discounted, for it is essential that these two models for philosophy be understood in as symbiotic, which I show, represents an authentic notion of Socratic/Platonic education (paideia). According to Fried (2006), Plato presents "two models of philosophy, the echonic and zetetic, simultaneously, because the zetetic 'journey' needs, as its fuel, the echonic preconstruction of the truth about the whole" (168). Socratic philosophy requires intimations of the truths to be sought, for example, Socrates imagines what it would be like to ascend from the darkness of the cave to the upper realm of intelligible Being and grasp the ultimate form of the Good. As Fried (2006) outlines, "the image, imitation, and "intimation of a transcendent truth gives us something to go on," but zetetic philosophy as practiced by Socrates resists the temptation to expect from its inquiries instances of absolute, irrefutable instances of the types of truth represented within the echonic imagery (167).

For example, it must be noted that when Socrates is recounting the allegory for Glaucon, Socrates explicitly states, when considering the soul's journey to the intelligible realm, "Whether it is true or not, only the god knows. But this is how I see it" (Plato, 1997, 999, 517b). And, again, in myth of "cosmic justice" and the warrior Er, a tale that closes the *Republic*, we find that the explicit purpose is never to convince the reader of the truth (as *logous*) that it contains, rather Plato incorporates this myth and others because he knows that absolute

possession of the truth cannot be maintained absolutely, if at all. And in the cosmic parable of the myth of Er, Socrates leaves the young men with a vision of the whole that is a *mythos*, not a full and thorough rational account, a *logos*. As myth, it is a substitute for the complete, echonic logos of the truth that he cannot provide (Fried, 2006, 168).

To envision the *zetetic* model that Fried (2006) offers in terms of the process of education is to begin within the mode of philosophical *deconstruction*, which might be said to express the indisputable negative function of philosophical critique, which demands that we recognize and face up to our "ignorance," our severe limitations as human thinkers, and we move through dialectic inquiry to disturb the prejudices, opinions, beliefs, and habituated practices that have a hold on us. The second move toward *preconstruction*, represents the "provisional construction of the outlines of an integrated account of something in the light of a truth only partially glimpsed" (Fried, 2005, 167). In this moment we must be open to reinterpretations, revisions, and the outright rejections of that which the dialectic has revealed, but it is essential, for if the "given is unsatisfactory, and we seek to make it better, then some intimation of the good is needed as an indication that our striving is not meaningless. But this intimation need not

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We find this notion of the "ideal" form of political state education as represented in words and ideas alone in Gadamer's (1980) hermeneutic interpretation of Plato. In relation of the authentic education of the philosopher kings, the education that Plato espouses for the ruling of the state in Book VI of the *Republic* is understood by Gadamer as a "state in thought, not any state on earth. That is to say, its purpose is to bring something to light and not to provide an actual design for an improved order in real political life" (48). The educative aspect of the *Republic* is, much like Fried's (2006) interpretation, to be found within the unfolding of the dialectic between Socrates and his interlocutors, and as Zuckert (1996) states in her analysis of Gadamer's hermeneutics, that by "describing the philosophical education through which a just city can be brought into being, Socrates provides Plato's brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus with such a philosophical education; and by describing Socrates' conversation for his readers, Plato provides them with such an education as well" (81).

be, indeed should not be, final or absolute" (Fried, 2006, 168). The *reconstructive* mode of zetetic philosophy requires the intimations of truth discussed above, for philosophy's "journey upward" requires *echonic* preconstructions of the truth, and Plato presents these preconstructions in terms of myths or as "unrealized ideals," and "because they are *only* intimations, and as such, they must be deconstructed to serve for the very fuel for which they are intended in spurring on zetetic philosophy's search" (Fried, 2006, 168). The final mode of *reconstruction*, which ultimately leads to the *deconstructive* mode in the ongoing process, as the dialectic continues to develop, represents the moment when there occurs the transcendence of those engaged in discourse wherein the dialectic makes possible the appropriation of new forms of understanding, and this occurs in communal discourse with others as we "make use of what we can of the intimations of truth that are latent in the tradition to which we belong (Fried, 2006, 167).

2. Non-Propositional Knowledge of the Virtues in Socratic Dialectic: The Unique Characteristics of *Philosophical Understanding*

In Platonic scholarship focused on systematic and doctrinal readings of Plato's Socrates, it is common to identify the type of knowledge of the virtues that Socrates seeks as "propositional" in nature, that is, to know that something is the case and be able to give an account of how that it is true. For example, it is common to read the Republic and imagine that the dialectic that is crucial to the education of the philosopher-kings is concerned with knowledge of virtue in terms of a "conception of knowledge which has received the most philosophical attention in modern times: 'propositional knowledge,' or knowing that such and such is the case" (Brickhouse and Smith, 1997, p. 43). In relation to the discussion in section one, this epistemological view emerges from the conception of Socrates (Plato) consistent with the echonic notion of philosophy, and it is a view expressed by analytic philosophers such as Fine (1979), who claims that the Socratic search for "definitions," or "reasoned accounts" (logous) of the virtues, is ultimately a search for propositional truths, where a knows x, is translatable into a knows what x is, into a knows that x is F. Much of contemporary education, even education models grounded in the so-called "Socratic method" (e.g., Adler's Paideia Project), informed as they are by Scholar Academic ideology, embrace and favor forms of knowledge in the curriculum reducible to propositional discourse, which gives the impression that knowledge is "objective" and located at a great distance from the human as it is immersed in the world of its experientially involved projects. On this view, to repeat, the Socratic pursuit of defining the form (eidos) of virtue rests in the quest for propositional, "definitional" knowledge - philosophy calls it "apodictic discourse" - a proposition (or definition) that can be demonstrated, proven either true or false.

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⁸ Drawing inspiration from Fried's (2005) reading, it is possible to think about Plato's use of "echonic" imagery in the form of idealized myth in the following way: In Letter VII Plato talks of the necessity of "image" (eidolon) functioning within the "four ways of knowing" such that it affords an imperfect copy or representation of the thing in question, e.g., the drawing of the circle allows us to see, within its representation, albeit imperfect, something "true" about the "thing in itself," i.e., the circle itself. The imaginative imagery of myth, which come alive through a language that must work beyond technical, propositional discourse, also affords us a glimpse into the thing itself, providing some sense, again, in an imperfect way, of the truth of the thing's Being (allethos estin on). Myths, however, allow us a kind of privileged vision that the circle fails to achieve, namely, rather than a static imitation, it affords us with a living "imitation" and hence invites us to participate in the truths it strives to show despite the limitations of language, for even the poetic and creative language of myth fails to reveal the truth of Being, according to Plato. But as an idealized vision, which stretches beyond the bounds of the mere representation of the drawing, because myths are rooted in emotion, and most importantly, the imagination. Hughes (1987), talking about the power and educative aspects of myths writes that the use of myths serves an ontological function by reconciling the "inner" world with the "outer" world. Myths allow us to embrace "both worlds simultaneously," wherein the "full presence of the inner world combines with and is reconciled to the full presence of the outer world" (171). Through the use of myth, we might say, Plato affords us a glimpse into our ontological relationship to the truth of Being, and although an incomplete image, we are opened at once to the "truth" of human finitude in its relation to our potential-for-Being in a way that lives in language, but somehow lives beyond it – in an unrealizable, but nonetheless inspirational ideal of "truth."

Against this view, drawing on the work of Gonzalez (1995, 1999), I present an interpretation of Socrates' notion of philosophical understanding, i.e., the unique form of insight into the Being of virtue, which situates the knower between everyday forms of discourse (beliefs and opinions) and the technical (and teachable) discourse of the sophists, the itinerant self-proclaimed teachers of virtue. The form of understanding associated with Socrates' philosophical pursuit of the virtues is crucial from the standpoint of education and of potential education, because the issue of whether or not virtue can be taught is an issue that separates Socrates from his sophistic counterparts. Bound up with this issue is one of Socrates' favorite analogies: the analogy between "knowledge" and the practice of the technical arts (techne), and "knowledge" as related to moral behavior (sophia). For example, Socrates wrestles with this issue in the Protagoras, a dialogue that seems to indicate that if Socrates is able to define virtue, the techne-analogy as related to morality, virtue, and excellence (arête) might be legitimate. Protagoras explicitly claims to teach, "sound deliberation, both on and in public affairs – how to reach one's maximum potential for success in political debate and action" (Plato, 1997, 455, 319a). Protagoras holds a technical definition of virtue, as knowledge related to the success in domestic and public affairs. However, it is a far cry from the complex and fragile notion of philosophical understanding that Socrates pursues in his quest to "know" the virtues. Considering the issue of teaching virtue, presupposes that the philosophical understanding of virtue is identical to its technical understanding, i.e., that the form of knowledge called techne is identical with Socratic Sophia, and this is why it is important to mark out the distinction between these two dissimilar forms of knowing by elucidating Socrates view of knowledge-and-virtue (Gadamer, 1978, 1980, 1991; Gonzalez, 1995, 1997; Hyland, 1975, 2006).

Techne, the knowledge of the craftsman (artisan), is transferable, from expert to novice with little to no distortion, for techne "is a tried and true way to perform a professional skill, in contrast to instinctive ability (physis) or mere chance or tuche" (Peters, 1979, 190). From an educational perspective it represents the type of knowledge with which the teacher might successfully be able to fill the empty vessel that is the student. This also relates to the sophists, for the type of "technical" knowledge they possess, and hence profess to teach, which might be classified as propositional in nature (Gonzalez, 1997, 21). This properly represents a "technical" model for knowing (and doing) wherein we see in advance the end, or end product (ergon), and then, by applying techniques (poiesis), we arrive at the predicted end, or goal (telos). In this model, it is possible to imagine capturing the "definition" of virtue in terms of propositional knowledge and then applying it in a manner to direct and inform moral praxis with efficiency and success. Contrarily, philosophical understanding as conceived by Plato and Socrates before him, is not transferable in the same manner as techne. For example, in the Symposium, as Gonzalez (1995) observes, "Socrates remarks to Agathon how wonderful it would be if wisdom (sophia) were like water, which can be poured from a fuller vessel into an emptier one, implying that [philosophical wisdom] is not like this" (175). Zuckert (1996) punctuates the point in the following manner when stating, "The knowledge required to make good choices does not have the character of art or techne like carpentry, medicine, or navigation" (74).

In light of the foregoing statements, it is evident that the knowledge, or understanding, of virtue for Socrates is not objective, as in the natural sciences, which stands in the end beyond both method and inquirer. This knowledge is neither a *techne* nor an *episteme* proper, which might be expressed through tightly reasoned propositional discourse. Thus, it defies transfer from one inquirer to another in such a way that avoids ambiguity, confusion, or dissembling. It is possible, however, to describe the characteristics of philosophical knowledge in the following manner: (1) It is a form of *insight* that,

The entire quote in the *Symposium* runs as follows, and it of course expresses Socrates sarcastic remark to Agathon who invites Socrates to sit down next to him so that he might learn from him, stating, "Come and sit next to me Socrates. Then perhaps I shall absorb whatever it was you were thinking about outside. You must have found the answer, or you wouldn't have come to join us." Of course, Socrates has come for discourse, and his response expresses his distrust of the view that knowledge of important matters can simply be transferred, as from teacher to student: "Wouldn't it be marvelous, Agathon," Socrates said, "if ideas were the kind of things which could be imparted simply by contact, and those of us who had few could absorb them from those who had a lot – in the same way that liquid can flow from a full container to an empty on if you put a piece of string between them?" (Plato, 1997, 175d).

although emerging from the discursive process of dialogue, is itself non-discursive; (2) It is *non-propositional* and cannot tell us that something is the case, rather it is a knowledge of "how," but is not on that account reducible to any form of practical knowledge (e.g., knowing how to ride a bicycle), but rather a form of practical knowledge, or better, an understanding of what we *ought* to do that is *exhibited* and *embodied* within the dialectical inquiry into virtue; (3) It is *manifest*, i.e., it presences in the midst of philosophical inquiry, and it is not *describable*, where "describable" means communicating propositional truths without distortion; and (4) It is neither wholly subjective nor objective in nature, rather it *mediates* both of these realms, but it is intensely "reflexive" in nature, i.e. it is a form of self-knowledge, wherein self is known, and in varying degrees, transformed in relation to the Being of virtue, and so there is a distinctly *phronetic* character to this understanding (Gallagher, 1999, Gonzalez, 1999).

Plato's *Letter VII* is an appropriate place to begin thinking on the issue of the unique nature philosophical knowledge, for here, Plato describes such knowledge in no uncertain terms as being wholly other than the knowledge associated with propositions. Gonzalez (1995) makes the claim that the type of philosophical understanding we are discussing is not only a characteristic of the early "aporetic" dialogues, for "to a lesser or greater degree, this is the characteristic of *all* of Plato's dialogues" (171). In *Letter VII*, Plato describes in poetic terms both the various stages of the dialectic and the form of philosophical insight, which this process manifests. By attempting to answer such questions as "What is courage?" or "What is Justice?" Socrates is aware that to respond by means of propositions will only "qualify" the virtue, state that it has *this* or *that* property, but this is not the same as the knowledge of the virtue *qua* virtue. We can discourse about virtue, but cannot express it explicitly in propositional terms; this is because it has "the character of that insight which Plato describes with the metaphor of the 'leaping flame' (186). It is necessary to quote Plato on this in matter, because he makes the seemingly fantastic claim that despite the voluminous writing he has produced, his works still fail to communicate fully this notion of philosophical truth, or understanding, of virtue:

There is no writing of mine about these matters, nor will there ever be one. For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of a subject, suddenly, like light flashing forth when a flame is kindled, it is born of the soul and straightaway nourishes itself (Plato, 1997, 1659c-d).

"It is for this reason," argues Gonzalez (1995), "and not for the sake of any obscurantism, that this knowledge cannot be expressed in words as other studies can be" (186). Reading Plato's words should not cause us to view him in terms of a "mystic," for Plato undoubtedly embraces the process of sustained, rigorous argumentation and discussion in his philosophy ("long-continued intercourse"), in fact the discourse that unfolds dialectically is the prerequisite for the revelation of the "flashing forth" of philosophical insight, or understanding. What might this dialectic look like, which facilitates this form of unique philosophical understanding? In Letter VII, Plato states that the dialectic contains five phases, the fifth representing the understanding of the Being of virtue (alethos estin on). To begin, Plato state that there are "three things that are necessary, if knowledge of it [virtue] is to be required," and he identifies these things as "name," "definition," and "image," then he states, "knowledge comes fourth," and then, "in the fifth place we must put the object itself, the knowable and truly real being (Plato, 1997, 1659, 342a-b). The first three components contribute to the fourth phase, which, as Gonzalez (1999) states, as related to "knowledge (episteme), insight (nous), and true belief (alethes doxa) concerning the [first three], and of these "insight (nous) is nearest to the fifth in similarity and kinship, while the others [i.e., true belief and the knowledge confined to the first three] are further removed from it" (249). What truly separates the fourth from the fifth moment is that the fourth still lives at the level of propositional discourse, and thus reveals the "quality" of the thing, but is not able to provide understanding of the Being of the thing. We can, and indeed must, talk about the quality of virtue and attempt to intimate or poetize in speech its true Being, but it remains the case that for Plato, the understanding of the Being of virtue "cannot be expressed in words," and we must be aware, that for Plato, there exists not contradiction between discussing and writing on the nature of virtue and failing to capture and express this nature in language (Gonzalez, 252).

However, this is not to indicate that propositional discourse and discursive modes of reasoning are useless when pursuing the philosophical understanding of virtue's Being, in fact that are indispensable for the dialectician. For as Plato makes explicit, our statements, arguments, refutations, along with the continued drive to hold oneself within the dialectic are essential aspects if we are to experience a fleeting, ephemeral glimpse into the nature of virtue, which occurs "only through long and earnest labor," when all the things, "names, definitions, and visual and other perceptions – have been rubbed against one another and tested," when those in the process of seeking understanding "in good will and without envy – only then, when reason and knowledge are at the very extremity of human effort, can they illuminate the nature of the object" (Plato, 1997, 1661, 344b). But what of the understanding that results from the "rubbing against" (tribein) of statements and arguments, what form does this type of "knowledge" assume? Philosophical understanding provides insight into the virtue that is brought to presence within the dialogue where there is a move by the participants to refrain from wither breaking off the discussion or intellectualizing the virtue, i.e., attempting to render it present to the intellect through the formal operations of cognition which seek to grasp and communicate the object of our understanding through propositional language. It is possible to conceive this form of philosophical understanding in terms of an "acquaintance" with the Being of virtue, but "not in the narrow sense of direct cognition of some sensible object" (Gonzalez, 1999, 168). It is rather a "seeing into" the nature of virtue, which might be conceived as antecedent to any and all attempts to systematize and organize our various beliefs about virtue. Philosophical understanding, as grasped by Plato, is "presupposed by, rather than the result of, any attempt to relate or organize our beliefs" (178, emphasis in original). Philosophical understanding might be said to offer a glimpse into the whole of virtue upon which the various parts (components/qualities/types) depend for their legitimacy. 10

It is possible, I think, to relate this form of understanding to Gadamer's (1978) notion of truth (which, of course, is derived from Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Section 44) as *aletheia*, or primordial dis-closedness (literally, "un-forgetting"). Gadamer conceives of truth in terms of 'experience,' or the original moment of an event's (phenomenon's) 'dis-closedness,' or revelation in the midst of hermeneutic-dialogic interpretation, and this view requires a reassessment of the primary and traditional way in which we judge and determine truth as it is understood and validated through the *correspondence model*, where truth represents the intersection and agreement of the subjective knower and that which is known objectively. Truth, in terms of traditional epistemology, is located at an objective remove from the individual, and this conception of truth as the connection between 'idea and thing,' grounds many scholarly, doctrinal interpretations of Plato. When the Being of virtue is revealed to the understanding there is an undeniable reflexivity that is characteristic of this phenomenon, wherein understanding turns "back on itself in order to see the source of its own illumination" (Gonzalez, 1995, 174). When we understand the "good," "justice," "temperance," or "courage," the virtue is "present in our knowledge in a way no mere object of knowledge can be" (175). Zuckert (1996), in her analysis of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* further develops the character of "philosophical understanding," which is never the

¹⁰ As stated, this talk of philosophical understanding smacks of a certain "mysticism," and this is precisely the view most adopt in education when talk of "intuition" in the classroom, as a viable and autonomous form of "knowing," is referenced – intuition, as Arnheim (1985) states, is not a "freakish specialty of clairvoyants and artists but one of the two fundamental and indispensable branches of cognition" (77). Arnheim adds, as related to the issues at hand, that for Plato, "intuition was the highest form of human wisdom" (79). To what extent it is possible to draw an analogy between the type of philosophical understanding I am dealing with and the findings of cognitive psychology and education is beyond the scope of this present study, however, it is interesting to note the similarities between what Plato philosophizes in the *Letter VII* and the manner in which intuition functions within the processes of human cognition. "Intuition is best defined as one particular property of perception, namely, its ability to apprehend directly the effect of interaction taking place in a field or gestalt situation" (78). What is given to the senses in multiplicity is "forged into a unified percetual image by the mental power we call intuition," and as related to what has been stated about philosophical understanding, it might be liked to the ability to move beyond the multiplicity of varying "qualities" of virtue and see, as it were, the whole of virtue, albeit in a fleeting and ephemeral perception (82).

"agreement between word or idea and thing," rather it emerges "from the disclosure or presentation of being(s) in relation to one another in a world to a receptive or open human being" (86).

This form of understanding affirms what Gadamer writes about the ontology of the "inbetween," for hermeneutics is "based upon the polarity of familiarity and strangeness" (295). Just as Gonzalez (1999) situated this form of understanding between the everyday knowledge we have and the sophistic, theoretical knowledge of the supposed teachers of virtue, this form of understanding of the Being of virtue, might be related to Gadamer's philosophy. Although a form of enlightenment, philosophical understanding is never full disclosure, or knowledge, of the essence, or form (eidos) of virtue, and thus situates the participants in-between what they understand and that which remains concealed from them, and this revelation has crucial implications for self-knowledge as it emerges in community with others:

The locus of understanding invariably involves being in between what, on the one hand, we have understood and what, on the other hand, we intuit we have yet to understand. Understanding entails a process of becoming different to ourselves. We do not merely encounter the different but become different to ourselves because of the encounter (Davey, 2006, 16).

Importantly, this revelation, insight into and understanding of the Being of virtue relates to praxis, that is, while theory is an indispensable aspect of Plato's philosophy, it is not the end all and be all of living the good life, the life of excellence (*arête*). Theory informs praxis, and we might say, the reverse is also the case, especially when considering Socrates in terms of a *zetetic* philosopher, or truth-seeker. The reflexive nature of philosophical understanding is grounded in the overall reflexive characteristic of Socratic philosophy, which has the following structure and characteristics: (1) one cannot understand virtue without undergoing a profound transformation and (2) this form of understanding is non-transferable through traditional pedagogical means (Gonzalez, 1995, 175). Here, bound up with this unique form of philosophical understanding, is a crucial reason why the traditional educational model of Socrates-as-teacher must be put in question, for one who was in the possession of "doctrines [of truth] could easily pass them on to another and 'store them away' without being personally transformed by them," and yet this is precisely what Plato considers to be impossible with respect to philosophical understanding, namely, it resists all attempts to be made "objectifiable as a set of doctrines" (Gonzalez, 174-1750). ¹¹

¹¹ The understanding of virtue, revealed and appropriated by those participating in the dialectic, would, as Teloh (1986) states, "produces a strong disposition for action, one which cannot be overthrown" (55). This is precisely what Socrates suggests, couched in the form of the interrogative, in the Protagoras when refuting the position that it is desire and passion over "knowledge" that rules the individual: "Now, does the matter seem like that to you, or does it seem to you that knowledge is a fine thing capable of ruling the person, and if someone were to know what is good and bad, then he would not be forced by anything to act other wise than knowledge dictates, and intelligence would be sufficient to save a person?" (Plato, 1997, 745, 352c). As related to Teloh's notion of the understanding of virtue producing a disposition for action, Gonzalez (1995, 1999) marks out the clear distinction between knowing "that" something is the case and knowing "how" to do something, and this represents, respectively, the difference between propositional and non-propositional forms of knowing. This distinction, of course, goes back to Ryle's (1949) Concept of Mind, and much critique has been written about this distinction (e.g., Martin. 1961), wherein a further distinction can be drawn with respect to "knowing how." It is Gonzalez that really marks out a unique distinction as it relates to both Socratic dialectic and as it might apply to education: He claims that there is a marked difference between knowing how to ride a bike and knowing how to behave morally. To draw out this distinction as succinctly as possible it is the second case, that of knowing how to behave morally that is irreducible to propositional language - this because it functions on a normative plane, and deals with specifically what we *ought* to do as moral beings. Knowing how to ride a bike, i.e., the knowledge-in-praxis, which makes the activity possible, is not merely implying what we *ought* to do in order to ride, it is informing our action in such a way that it is dependent, in a crucial manner, for its successful enactment on propositional statements that tell us (and can teach us) that "this is how you ride a bike." If we do not heed it strictly, for there is only so much space for improvisation when riding a bike, e.g., we must adhere to the laws of physics, we will find ourselves flatly on the pavement.

This crucial notion of Socrates and his interlocutors representing a philosophical community of learners who are sharing the joint task of enlightenment will be developed in the final section of the essay, wherein I relate understanding to practical knowledge, or "know-how," which is not propositional – as it is concerned always more with what we *ought* to do than with what *is* – Philosophy, however, is not simply practical know-how – it also includes the insight into the Being of virtue. "Even if we grant that philosophy is essentially a 'know how,' we must also grant that it is not the same thing as knowing how to ride a bicycle. The reason is that philosophy clearly has *some* theoretical content" (Gonzalez, 1995, 183). Practicing philosophy, as we find Socrates doing in the *Charmides* and *Laches*, call it "carefor-the-soul" or the moral pursuit of excellence, we come to understand things that facilitate and inspire right action, but this is not merely the knowledge of a "skill to be imitated but also with insight into what courage or temperance is," and this insight is "not a definition that is stated at the end of the dialogue but rather something that is 'sparked' by what happens in the dialogue as a whole' (184). It is not some "formula that could be expressed in propositional form; it is instead a kind of knowledge which can only be *exhibited* and is exhibited best in the philosophical enterprise (i.e., in what Socrates is *shown* to *do*)" (Gonzalez, 1995, 186, emphasis in original).

While this notion of philosophical understanding as introduced above might appear abstruse, I will attempt to formalize it for the reader by turning to Gonzalez's analysis of this form of insight as it arises within the context of the dialogue, within the praxis of questioning the virtue. For the sake of brevity, I focus on the definition of "courage" in the Laches, wherein this notion of philosophical understanding set between the two extremes of knowing represented by the generals Laches and Nicias – the former defines courage in terms that are intuitive and experiential and the latter defines it is terms of a "sophistic" understanding, or on what he believes he has heard Socrates "teach." Thus, the understanding of the Being of courage resides at a distance from both "unreflective intuition (which characterizes everyday experience)" and the "knowledge of propositions (which is what the sophists claim to have)" (Gonzalez, 1999, 21). By attempting to move beyond both these forms of knowledge, which indeed represent the initial "tell-me-what-you-believe" requirements of the dialectic, through a process of question and refutation. Gonzalez's (1995) claim is the Being of the virtue, and the understanding thereof, which presences in the midst of the discourse, does so only when those involved are dedicated to holding open the discussion, i.e., the so-called definition of courage emerges, and indeed is embodied within the unfolding of the discussion, and does not live beyond the space of the discourse as would an instance of "objective" knowledge. The meaning of the virtue in question is to be found in the very process of dialectic, inseparable for the practice itself, and not in some answer that would terminate the process - "if we inquire properly into the nature of virtue, our inquiry will itself exhibit virtue" (162).

It is helpful here to recall our definition of Socrates as *zetetic* philosopher, because in adopting the attitude that philosophical understanding is limited, finite, and fleeting, with its tendency toward modes of dissembling, Socrates enters the dialectic focused on revealing the Being of courage in such a manner that already "courageously inquiries into the nature of courage and this exhibits courage in the very process of inquiring into it" (Gonzalez, 1995, 171). Despite the dialogue's various turns and *aporetic breakdowns*, Socrates maintains the courage to hold himself and inspire others to maintain their persistence in the pursuit of truth, there is an understanding of courage that manifests, and it is unlike the "knowledge" of courage displayed by Laches, for Socrates' understanding of courage "does not hurl itself into the unknown or give itself over to misology"; conversely, Socrates' understanding of courage is unlike the "knowledge" of courage displayed by Nicias, for it "does not tenaciously hold on to formulas but is willing to abandon a statement if the truth reveals itself to be elsewhere" (171). The philosophical practice of dialectic as envisioned by Socrates, as outlined above, "*shows* rather than proves," and "*manifests* rather than describes" (162) a unique form of understanding of courage that is

open to contingency, i.e., which knows that it cannot anticipate the truth or capture it once and for all in certain rules or definitions [...] it is willing to argue and venture a hypothesis, knowing that in its very ignorance it has a share of wisdom. Both skepticism and dogmatism are forms of cowardice. The tension

between knowing and not knowing, the desire to be good without the possession of any skill that will guarantee goodness, *this* is the proper sphere of courage" (171).

This manner of embodying and demonstrating courage in dialogue with others, which is facilitated, and indeed made possible, by the form of philosophical understanding of virtue as discussed, is precisely one of the most difficult aspects of Socrates' unique understanding of education (paideia) to come to terms with, but this is also (and herein lies the tragic-double bind of Socratic philosophy) what makes philosophy the most worthwhile of all life-pursuits, and this is expressed by Fried (2006) as the "burden," or the ultimate struggle (polemos) of the zetetic philosopher: Philosophy, as practiced and lived by Socrates must be recognized as a "lifelong, ongoing task, one that when properly understood, far from causing despair, opens us up to the richness of the human condition – suspended as it is between finitude and transcendence" (172).

3. The Hermeneutic Aspects of Socratic Dialectic-as-Dialogue: Philosophical Understanding and Education as Bildung (Paideia)

It is possible to map on to the understanding of philosophical hermeneutics and Bildung the interpretations of both Fried (2005), with his notions of Socrates as zetetic-skeptic and view to authentic dialectic unfolding through the modes of deconstruction, reconstruction, and preconstruction, and Gonzalez (1995, 1999), with his reading of Platonic dialectic as a living-linguistic context wherein a unique form of philosophical understanding flashes briefly and manifests, whereby co-participants who engage in the ever-renewed practice and process of interrogating the virtues are transformed. To accomplish this I turn to Gadamer (1980, 1989), Davey (2006), Hyland (2004), Gallagher (1999), and Zuckert (1998). In pursuing the issue of Bildung and philosophical understanding as related to the Socratic dialectic the issue of how Bildung relates to philosophical hermeneutics will be explored. In this final section I explore the unique view of the human being that philosophical hermeneutics adopts as it relates to Plato's portrayal of Socrates, focused on elucidating the ontology of human dwelling, showing that this context is bounded in the extreme by limitation, distance, and radical finitude. I also examine the way in which dialogue (language) structures the context, or space, of the dialectic, and this relates to Plato's description of the revelation of philosophical understanding in Letter VII wherein he show how the dialectic movement between the "four ways" of knowing leading to the "fifth way" is grounded in the "play' of language. This makes possible the transformative and formative aspects of the dialectic as a context for a unique and non-formal education as paideia-Bildung, which is a more pure and original form of education (paideia/Bildung) than the education Plato suggests for the state in the Republic. Elucidating Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics will afford the reader an understanding of the Socratic dialectic that embraces the decidedly "existential," "aporetic," and "dialogic," characteristics of Plato's thinking (Hyland, 2004).

Following Gadamer (1980, 1989), I render authentic education (as paideia)¹² in terms of the German notion of Bildung. There are certain aspects of this concept as it relates, or better, embodies education, that I will initially draw out in my attempt to connect Socratic dialectic method with philosophical hermeneutics: Bildung is an inward disposition of the soul, which, transformed through the interpretive understanding of virtue, passes into sensibility and character, hence engendering and inspiring enlightened practical-phronetic comportment. Bildung is an ever-renewed educational process

exerted on the state. His critique of poetry develops this counterweight in the form of an explicit critique of existing paideia and of its trust in and reliance upon human nature and faith in the power of purely rational instruction" (58).

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¹² Gadamer (1980) draws a distinction between Plato's "philosophical" understanding of *paideia* and the sophistic notion of paideia. It is possible from the following description to associate the "sophistic" notion of paideia (education) with that of the Scholar Academic tradition that asserts its force within contemporary education. It is evident that Plato's conception of paideia, which is evident from the characterization of his philosophy herein, in addition to eschewing the categorical explanatory power of rational thought, the drive to retain the religious and fantastic elements of mythos within the authentic philosophical quest: "Plato's paideia is thus meant as a counterweight to the centrifugal pull of those forces of the sophist enlightenment being

that "grows out of an inner process of formation and cultivation, and therefore constantly remains in a state of continual Bildung" (Gadamer, 1989, 10). There is a crucial sense of self-development and reflexivity associated with *Buildung*, for the processes of education "by which and through which one is formed become completely one's own" (10). *Bildung* is the very opposite of "training" or the passing along of "skill sets," rather it is a "transformative educative process of formation through the engagement and involvement with others" (Davey, 2006, p. 39). As Nordenbo (2002) states, "The suffix – *ung* on a verbal noun [*Bild*] in German indicates that we are dealing *either* with an act, a process or an occurrence," and it is important to note that "as an educational idea, a person has acquired *Bildung* only if he or she has assisted *actively* in its formation or development" (p. 342). It is important to note that *Bildung* plays a central role in philosophical hermeneutics, for philosophical hermeneutics is neither in search of theoretical nor technical knowledge, but rather the philosophical quest for a form of understanding that is both transformative and formative. As related to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, Plato's understanding of *paideia*, and the practice of the dialectic, Davey (2006) states,

Bildung is both a formative and transformative (dialogical) process implicit within the dynamics of hermeneutic encounter. Insofar as the parties involved in a hermeneutic encounter emerge from it thinking differently about themselves. Bildung is transformative (as Bildung haben). Bildung is, in part, the process of coming to understand what we have understood differently. Bildung is formative in that it brings something into being from within the encounter. It forms a hermeneutic civility between those who are obliged to each other for becoming different to themselves, and who know that they are dependant upon the other for opening potentialities for understanding that are not presently theirs (41).

This quotation indeed highlights the educative aspects of dialectic as dialogue within philosophical hermeneutics, and it is to be found within the "play of language" in the act of interpretation, or as related to Socrates, through the interrogation of the virtues by means of a dialectic practice that is as once "dialogic." To clarify, the understanding emerging from the process of *Bildung* is transformative and facilitates the "process of coming to recognize the difference between what was once understood and what is now understood" (43). It is formative in that it generates "new (social) formations of understandings, formations that are not entailments of or, indeed, variations on what was previously understood" in the process of learning because "the human is essentially a linguistic being" (43). And, of course, it is language that makes all grades and forms of understanding possible in the first instance. For as Gadamer (1989) writes, "Being that can be understood is language" (470). This quotation bespeaks that Gadamer's hermeneutics is in the first instance "guided by the basic idea that language is a medium where I and world meet or, rather, manifest their original belonging together" (469). Our linguistic being speaks "from a collective language world that does not exist over and against us but expresses its being in and through how we speak. A word or concept is never solitary but resides within a web of associated meanings and uses" within the communal "games" that we "play" in and through language (Davey, 2005, 24).

In the *Apology* Socrates ponders the severe limitations of human knowing, and if there is a wisdom that reaches beyond the bounds of the human, say for instance, the perfect wisdom of the gods, then, as Socrates assures us, he certainly does not posses it. Socrates is acutely aware of his lack of knowledge when stating that he does not think he knows the most important "truths" of philosophy (Plato, 21, 21d). This provides us with a view not only into the gaping chasm separating the gods from humankind, but as well a glimpse into the ontological nature of the human being as questioner and, ultimately, as original learner, in terms already introduced as related to Fried's (2005) discussion of Socrates as *zetetic-skeptic* and the general view to authentic philosophy this interpretation offers, which is a view to philosophy that shares marked similarities to the Gadamer's (1989) philosophical hermeneutics. For it is possible to understand Socrates as presented in the two foregoing sections as a philosopher in pursuit of wisdom, or human understanding, in a manner reminiscent of the hermeneutic pursuit of finite transcendence through the appropriation of new forms of understanding, wherein the quest to live, or inquire into, the "good" life embodies an ongoing practical pursuit of the virtues through

the practice of the dialectic, which is always dialogic in nature, and, which is also educational, but in the sense of learning that is markedly different than and antecedent to any notions of formalized, systematized education, or "schooling."

Gadamer (1991) states unequivocally that the human being is without an essence given in advance by either God or nature; subjectivity is not understood in terms of the hypokeimenon, or unchanging substratum that resists and persists through change, rather, as Gadamer states, the human is conceived in terms of its continual effort to define and re-define itself through the practice of dialectic: "Plato's philosophy is a dialectic not only because in conceiving and comprehending (im Begreifen) it keeps itself on the way to the concept (zum Begriff) but also because, as a philosophy that conceives and comprehends in that way, it knows man as a creature that is thus 'on the way' and 'between'" (3-4). The human is on the way to become what she is not-yet and as such perpetually and permanently resides in the ontological space of the *in-between*, vacillating between the familiar and the strange, enlightenment and ignorance, which sets her at a distance from full-disclosure of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others and the world, and, as related to our theme, full disclosure of the Being of virtue in knowledge. Davey (2006) refers to our lack of essence as "nothingness," which "articulates the transient nature of our 'becoming'" (61). The sense of nothingness defining the human condition "emphasizes that what we have been, what we are, and what we may yet become," is without end, non-deterministic, and without teleological direction (61). Although this nothingness is expressive of our vast and continually untapped potential as human beings, it is intimately linked with all that is limited, of all that is finite. This indicates that our knowledge is limited, our language is limited, and as a result "understanding remains a perpetually unfinished task," which "renders suspect the certainty claimed by adherents of method," by those who attempt to read Plato as a doctrinal thinker, where the dialectic is viewed as a "method" capable of producing results that might be expressed with propositional certainty, and that this "method" terminates when it produces definitive results (20).¹³

It is possible to relate finitude with the notion of nothingness and arrive at the crucial communal nature of the human being in philosophical hermeneutics, for "what we have yet to become is held within the encounters with the other and difference that we have not as yet gone through," and as such "nothingness emphasizes the ineliminable importance of our fellowship with the other" (Davey, 2005, 60-61). Davey stresses that the process of becoming educated as related to *Bilung* is never grounded in developing a sense of self-knowledge in an isolated manner, which of course would be an impossibility, rather self-knowledge occurs only when we engage others in instances where we allow their *otherness* to remain *as* other. Although Davey relates nothingness to a pervasive ontological sense of "absence," this is not to be construed as some sort of alienated sense of human solitude, as in the absence of others, rather this refers specifically to what was referenced earlier in terms of the absence of an essential notion of self. As Davey states, "The absence of an essence that determines the character of our responses implies that the formative and transformative nature of our responses are themselves of the essence. Our nothingness emphasizes that what we have been, what we may yet become is a consequence of our fellowship with others" (61). On a related note, Hyland (2004) argues that the pervasive theme of

On this point Davey (2005) articulates nicely the difference between Plato's dialectic practice as conceived herein and other scholarly interpretations that would reduce the dialectic to a rigorous method for securing sure and certain truths, or other interpretations, like that of Derrida, who insist that "philosophical hermeneutics" is a prelude to a manipulative framework wherein the process of refutation is liked to interlocutors enacting their "will-to-power" over others. Davey argues the following point: "If hermeneutic dialogue consisted solely of the agonistic language of claim and counterclaim, this criticism would have some merit. Achieving the best or most persuasive argument or gaining the last word would indeed, become the sole aim of an engagement. Mastery of argument and not the pursuit of hermeneutic transformation becomes the sole object of the exchange" (67-68). Here, Davey is obviously likening the elencus to that practiced by sophists and employed in both the courts and competitive forensic debate, wherein one schooled in the art of "argument" holds the power and skill to make the worst argument seem the best. However, Davey assures us that the aim of philosophical hermeneutics and the practice of dialectic as conceived by Plato is not to "achieve mastery of adversarial argument but to use shared intellectual converse and intuition as a means to transcending and transforming one's initial presuppositions and outlooks" (68). If we are open to Hyland's (2004) reading of Derrida's Platonic interpretations, such a misinterpretation of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics might be traced to Derrida's initial misreading of Plato as a "doctrinal" and systematic philosopher.

"finitude and incompleteness" is bound up with the human life represents the "most abiding theme of Gadamer's later work on Plato" (176). As is consistent with the tone of this essay, Hyland goes on to state that typical interpreters, from both analytic and continental schools of thought, that miss this crucial element of the dialectic "include the conviction that the theory of the forms, coupled with the ideal state of the *Republic* taken as a serious blue-print for a real state, entail a systematic completability, if not actual completeness, a *totalization* that is "virtually definitive of what comes to be criticized by Heidegger and others as 'metaphysics'" (176-177). Hyland, in line with our reading of Gonzalez (1995, 1999), states that the pervasive sense of incompleteness and finitude that haunts Plato's description of truth in *Letter VII* cannot be ignored, lest we miss giving Plato the fair and charitable reading he deserves.

Recall the unfolding of zetetic philosophical discourse according to Fried (2006), with its initial phase of deconstruction, and we shall view it through the lens of philosophical hermeneutics. This phase might be linked with the preparatory phase of stepping into the "hermeneutic circle" with a foreunderstanding of those things that we are about to interpret in the attempt to arrive at a deeper and more elaborate form of understanding, and this fore-having "conditions and is conditioned by any 'fore-sight' or 'fore-conception' that we may have in perceptual or cognitive experience" (Gallagher, 1999, 61). For example, in Gonzalez's (1995) reading the Laches we encounter both generals coming to the context of the dialectic, or "hermeneutic circle" with a different fore-understanding of courage: Laches, the "four square" man of practical action brings with him an experiential and lived understanding of the virtue and Nicias, an "intellectual who has often consorted with sophists," brings a technical definition of courage to the space of discourse – this represents Socrates' "tell me what you believe" (doxastic) requirement of the dialectic (168). As the process commences and proceeds, Socrates and his interlocutors deconstruct the various claims and counter claims, which have not yet been thoroughly and rigorously tested that will ultimately lead to the revision of each of their fore-conceptions of courage as they gather new and different information and then "project these meanings until the unity or adequacy of meaning becomes clear" (Gallagher, 1999, 61). Clearly in Plato's dialogues we encounter a multiplicity of potential insights into the virtues that Socrates and his interlocutors bring with them, sophistic definitions, everyday experiential knowledge, general opinions, and, even, the poetic insight provided by various mythological accounts. Due to the radical finitude defining our ontological place in the world, as zetetic thinkers, the intimations of the virtues we brings as fore-understanding "need not be, indeed should not be, final and absolute," and this is precisely what "distinguishes zetecism from doctrinaire institutionalism or absolutism" (Fried, 2006, 168).

Whereas above I focused on the "fore-understanding" of virtue, there is more that must be grasped prior to any philosophical endeavor of a zetetic nature, namely, as I have intimated, the foreunderstanding that all knowledge and indeed human existence is finite and limited, and this, as introduced above, is the recognition and acceptance of the "nothingness" of human existence (Davey, 2006). The zetetic model as introduced by Fried (2004) flatly denies that Socrates is a philosopher who is ever in possession (echonic) of categorical knowledge, for within the authentic dialectic of Socrates, knowledge, or philosophical understanding, is "not yet a possession of the absolute," for the process is "not yet a doctrine, if by doctrine we mean a theory that an author is determined to defend in the form of an orthodox system" (171). The deconstructive moment of zetetic philosophy might be related to the posture one adopts to questioning that reflects an aspect of "negative hermeneutics," which "demystifies the universal claims of method by particularizing them as an expression of a specific Weltanschuung)" (Davey, 2005, 27). The recognition of human finitude in philosophical hermeneutics "effects a shift from a perspective of doubt regarding universal claims to meaning toward an ecstatic, almost untheorizable, awareness of the inexhaustible possibilities of understanding," which represents the "nagative disclosure of what a particular interpretation is not," and simultaneously "allows our understanding of it to become more but never fully what it is" (27). Zetetic philosophy as related to philosophical hermeneutics, embraces the finitude of all thought and experience and sees the human as a being in transition, "inbetween" that which she is now and that which she will become in the future through the appropriation of the understanding facilitating the finite transcendence afforded by the dialectic process that is both

transformative and formative, which resists the temptation to afford any sense of closure to our developing sense of understanding (Gadamer, 1991).

Moving to analyze the context of the Socratic dialectic through the lens of Gadamer's hermeneutics, which will be related to Fried's (2004) elucidation of the practice of zetetic dialectic, I focus on the ontological concept of the human being as a linguistic being. This move will elucidate the process of hermeneutic understanding and of transformation and transcendence as instantiated in the moments of preconstruction and reconstruction in the Socratic dialectic as an original and formative educational activity (Bildung). According to Davey (2006), "Philosophical hermeneutics contests that language and the hermeneutic transformation it affords are not merely linked to the process of Bildung but actually generate it" (45-46). 14 It is in and through the play of language that *Bildung* occurs as education, wherein our individual "speech world" (Sprach Welt) is challenged, changed, expanded, and transformed. It is precisely due to the transformative and formative capacities of language that Bildung derives its power. The transformative capacity of language allows it to, in a poietic manner, in a moment of original creation, bring something wholly new into existence. The formative capacity of language "opens us to both our own horizons and to those of others," which is "dependent upon ongoing encounters with the other and otherness" (48). Through the play of language in interpretive activities, because we are linguistic beings, we can "leave our individual horizon and become located between what we have understood ourselves as being and what the other shows us we are capable of becoming" (48). The formative and transformative capacities of language changes our self-understanding, alters the manner in which we comport ourselves to the subject matter of our interpretation, which in turn alters our understanding and hence communication of that subject matter. Language holds the power to inspire both Bildung and Bildung haben, as linked respectively to the capacities of transformation and formation, and it is our linguistic being that "facilitates the formative dialogical space," or context, from out of which meaning, and thus education, emerges and transpires (48).

The three moments (*deconstruction*, *preconstruction*, *reconstruction*) of the *zetetic* dialectic outlined by Fried (2004) must not be thought of separate or disparate occurrences, rather they work in a symbiotic manner through a renewed process of cyclical unfolding. For this reason there is an intimate relationship between the modes of *preconstruction* and *reconstruction* in the dialectic and it is here where we find the play of language at work in the dialogues that is both related to the manifestation of philosophical understanding of virtue and the transcendence that is the educative occurrence of *Bildung*. The moments of the dialectic that are outlined by Fried (2005) are instantiated within the process as described by Gonzalez (1999) as they might be related to Gadamer's (1991) philosophical hermeneutics. For in these two phases we encounter Socrates and his interlocutors developing account of the virtues in light of truths that have only been partially glimpsed or recognized, which are being tested and refined through the process of *question-rejoinder-refutation* until there occurs a moment of "revelation" wherein the Being of the virtue presences to the understanding within the space of the dialectic and there occurs a transcendence of those involved in the practice, i.e., through the discursive "rubbing together" of the "four ways" - names, propositions, appearances and perception, and this includes the "images" of the *echonic* philosophical ideal and mythological accounts of things¹⁵ - understanding, or the "fifth way,"

Davey's (2006) vivid and accurate description of philosophical hermeneutics as "practice" over "method" nicely captures that crucial elements that are present to Gonzalez's (1995, 1999), Fried's (2006), and Hyland's (2004) reading of the Socratic dialectic. The reader will not the similarities between the Davey's description of philosophical hermeneutics and the descriptions contained herein within this analysis of the dialectic practice of Socrates: [P]hilosophical hermeneutics is not a philosophical method but a philosophical practice with a discernible grammar to its reasoning. Its intelligent intuitions concerning the finitude of thought and experience, the unfinished nature of meaning, the function of the hermeneutic differential, the incomplete nature of subject matters and the speculative character of language, all operate within a characteristic dialecticity" (26).

Gadmer (1980) has recognized, much like Freid (2005), the need for ideal imagery in Platonic philosophy. In the search for defining virtue, it was the concern of Socrates to seek out the "whole" in a definition that might functin as an "all-inclusive expression," which was "meant to point beyond single opinions about any one thing" (117). It was the quest of Socrates to search out the "indissoluble unity of the whole" of virtue, which might serve as the foundation of true insight, for "true knowledge can never be reached in anything partial" (117). This whole of things, according to Gadamer is to be found in the

appears "in terms of light and illumination," in a form of "knowledge" that defies propositional expression (Gonzalez, 1999, 253). What Socrates encounters in the dialectic through the "four ways" represents the the philosophical knowledge of the qualities, or characteristics, of the virtue, "which is all that the weakness of language can provide," when in fact he is searching for the "true being of the thing," which comes through language, but ultimately transcends it, because language "is incapable of expressing it" (261). What is always limited, according to Gonzalez, is knowledge that "is confined to words, images, and propositions" (262). It is true that language holds the power of revelation, but at once harbors the capacity to conceal conceals a "thing's true being in expressing only how it is qualified" (263).

Gadamer (1980) also analyzes the four ways of knowing leading to the "fifth way" in the dialectic within his reading of Plato's Letter VII as introduced earlier, (1) name or word, (2) explanation or conceptual determination, (3) appearance, example, figure, and (4) the knowledge or insight itself and he reminds us of the limited nature of knowing, which also includes the fifth component, "the luminousness of an insight which comes out of all of these" (philosophical understanding), for all are of "such a nature that is one avails oneself of them, one can never grasp the thing itself in complete certainty," one can never be sure that the "thing itself is displayed in its full 'disconcealed' intelligibility" (104). Words, which Gadamer calls the "basic experience of in every philosophical endeavor," are incapable of revealing the Being of the thing under discussion. This is because language fails to accomplish the phenomenon of transparency required in order to recede fully into the background and let the "thing itself," or the Being of the thing, to manifest in its full disclosure, because words, in the process of bringing something else to presence "assert themselves as whatever particular thing they are instead of fading out of view. For they are all something besides the thing they are presenting" (104). It is possible to trace the weakness of the logoi to the basic characteristic of language with respect to capturing the Being of virtue in speech, e.g., we can capture and express a thing's qualities and characteristics, we can provide vivid images by means of examples through discourse employing the four ways, but we ultimately fail to accurately and clearly capture and communicate the Being of the "thing itself," or virtue. For Socrates is it imperative that we pursue the philosophical understanding of the Being of virtue in order to "know" how to behave morally.

The dialectic, as described by Gonzalez (1999), proceeds as follows, and includes crucial aspects of Gadamer's interpretation of language: A rejoinder to a question ("What is X?") is provided to the question of what the true Being of the virtue is and a definition is advanced that expresses only the qualities or characteristics of virtue. The definition is then refuted by pointing out ambiguities or offering examples that have not yet been considered. The dialectic, according to Gonzalez (1999) is at once "negative" and positive," and he explains this below:

This dialectic is negative only in showing that no proposition can capture the specific the specific nature in question; it is positive, however, insofar as the very process of examining and refuting suggested definitions can provide insight into what this nature is [...] in the very process of refuting words, propositions, and images for the inability to express that nature in question (the "fifth"), insight is barely gained into what he nature is. The qualification "barely (*mogis*) is important. Because it shows that this insight [...] is not the kind of knowledge that will put an end to all inquiry or that can be "grasped" once and for all (267).

This for Gonzalez represents the weakness of words, images, and propositions for expressing philosophical understanding as conceived by Plato. However, through their use we "just barely get a

most developed form only in the mythological ideal of state in the *Republic*, which might be said to serve as the *echonic* impetus for the *zetetic* search for truth: "One will recall that it was a structural principle of an entire group of Plato's dialogues that the question of this or that virtue always was reduced to the question of the unity and entirety of virtue. Ultimately, the magnified constellation of this entirety took shape in te heavens of thought as a political utopia, and the way through the whole of knowledge of the idea of the Good was sketched out as the true form of education within the true state. Thus the *Republic* provides a mythological picture for precisely that insight as a whole and insight into the whole, of which Plato speaks in the *Seventh Letter*" (117-118).

glimpse through their cracks the true being which they all attempt but fail to express" (268). Gonzalez is careful to remind us that the "dialectician, therefore, does not fool himself into to thinking that the flaws of ordinary experience can be overcome through the construction of an ideal language or the systematization of a formal logic," for it is the case that in our "everyday use of words, propositions, and images the true natures of things already stand revealed to us, however darkly (doxa)" (271). As stated earlier, this form of understanding is not and cannot be an "object" of the intellect, nor does it reside at an objective metaphysical remove from the knower, rather it resides and is sheltered within the context, or space, of the dialectic itself, as related to the developing communal understanding and self-knowledge within the souls of the participants, which, in an important way, is already present in some nascent manner to the inquirer. Understanding of the Being of the virtue "is made possible by the fact that the truth, rather than being merely external to the process, is instantiated by it," thus in the discursive movement between the "four" ways of the dialectic interchange, we seek to "rub together" our "defective means of inquiry with the goal of sparking an insight that barely transcends them" (273).

It is possible to understand this process of the revelation of philosophical understanding as described above in terms of Gadamer's (1980, 1989) explanation of the interplay of language, meaning, and finite human transcendence. What Gadamer (1991) indicates about the "speculative" nature of language substantiates precisely what Gonzalez (1999) has stated about the impossibility of capturing the Being of virtue within propositional discourse, for there is far more to understanding our Being than propositional language can capture and convey, which is why it should not represent philosophy's privileged mode of communication. Language is a precarious phenomenon; indeed the entire enterprise of philosophical hermeneutics represents "a disciplined practice of speculative sensibility" (Davey, 2005, 26). Language cannot speak in such a way that it can objectify the things it references, rather it is a "medium in which those things come to presence" (190). Although words point beyond themselves, it is not as if they reference anything the might antedate language, "words both refer to, address, and allow that which is beyond them to emerge within language" (190). There is an undeniable speculative nature to language, i.e., the so-called precariousness of the logos is related to the "language ontology of philosophical hermeneutics" because despite the clarity of the words we employ, "whatever our chosen usage of the terms," it is always the case that language "will always convey or mean more than we imagine or intend" (24). Language, in many instances, also falls short of what it intends to convey, and so we might state, in light of these thoughts, that in this respect there is an "excess," or overflow, as well as "deficit" bound up with our language usage or "games." In relation to what Gonzalez (1999) has written, Gadamer (1980), in his analysis of Plato's Letter VII speaks directly to the speculative character of language, and its "intrinsic distortion-tendency," when outlining the entire process of arriving at philosophical understanding of virtue. This is because the four means "are trapped in the dialectic of the image or copy, for insofar as all four are intended to present the thing in and through themselves they must of necessity have a reality of their own. That which is meant to present something cannot be that thing. It lies in the nature of the means of knowing that in order to be means they must have something inessential about them" (112-113). Even when we reach "the fourth" - insight/knowledge - it is also "of such a nature that it asserts itself and thereby conceals the thing itself," and thus in "knowledge and insight there is distortion too" (112). Gadamer claims that we fall into error when we fail to recognize this, for we must avoid being "misled into thinking that which is inessential for something essential," as

It is interesting to note that this talk of language and "propositional truth" as conceived by Gadamer and Gonzalez has a correlate in the cognitive neuroscience of language as related to knowledge and the meaning of words in ordinary language. Bacalu (2012) writes that the knowledge we "claim" of the world is not the final take on anything, for the "conception of knowledge is illegitimately modeled on necessary truth [...] either/or thinking presupposes identity as an already established reality" (86). There are limits to language, which in turn affects the process of conceptualization, for as Bacalu states, "Thought processes are not definable over representations that are isomorphic to linguistic representations, where as linguistic representations underdetermine the conceptual contents they are used to convey" (88). This is not to say we don't have clear and certain "truth" when dealing with apodictic (propositional) discourse, harkening to Wittgenstein, it is the case that "logical propositions are true," however, what they convey holds little weight in the grand scheme of our practical and lived experiences, because they "carry no substantive information about the world" (87).

in falsely believing that the Being of virtue might be expressed though names, images, or propositions (113).

It is clear from Gadamer's reading that the discursive movement between the four ways of the dialectic as discussed above, while essential, does not guarantee that "if one avails oneself of them," that it is possible to "grasp the thing itself with complete certainty," for one can "never be sure that with these means the thing itself is displayed in its full, 'disconcelaed' intelligibility" (104). Gadamer also informs us that the knowledge, or understanding, that results from the dialectic process cannot be expressed in "plain words," or propositional, apodictic discourse, and thus "the state of the soul which we call knowledge or insight into the truth must also be of such a nature that it asserts itself and thereby conceals the thing itself" (112). Hyland's (2004) interpretation of this passage harkens to what was previously stated about the epistemological constitution of the "non-propositional" knowledge as discussed in relation to Gonzalez's (1995, 1999) analysis. Hyland (2004), providing further evidence for the relationship between Gadamer's notion of Platonic philosophical understanding and Heidegger's (1962) notion of primordial truth as aletheia, claims that the simultaneous asserting and concealing of truth relates to the "very nature of alethiea which Gadamer takes over from Heidegger," whereby we come to understand and accept that every "revelation of truth is always also a concealing," and this is true, as stated above, with respect to even the "highest mode of access to truth, full knowledge or insight" of the virtues for Plato (177). This, for our purpose, bespeaks the very nature of language in its intimate relationship to truth, for according to Gadamer (1980), "even knowledge of the ideas, although it cannot merely be derived from language and words, is still not to be attained without them" (105). For Hyland (2004) this represents the emphasis of philosophical hermeneutics on "dialogue, conversation, on the precariousness of logos" (181).

And yet, there is, for Gadamer (1980) a revelation of "truth" (allethos estin on) that is beyond the strict language usage occurring in the dialectic, which might be described as the experience of "advancing insight, the euporia," or good way through (119, my translation). This occurs when the Being of virtue presences to the understanding and the leaping flame nourishing the soul, which is a "truth-happening" that always occurs at an ontological distance, which cannot be fully traversed or overcome. Through talk, in communion with "well-meaning" and non-competitive like-minded individuals, a fleeting glimpse into the presence of the Being of virtue is made possible by the four ways, although none succeed in expressing the "thing itself" in words "that which is meant becomes visible in them" (115). As Gadamer writes, in Letter VII, Plato

describes how insight can still be attained, even within the given limitations and finitude of our human existence. The shared inquiry which never ceases in its effort to more sharply define word, concept, intuition in respect to another and which willingly puts all individual opinions to the test which abjuring all contentiousness and yielding to the play of question an answer – that shred inquiry should make possible not only insight into this or that specific things, but in so far is humanly possible, insight into all virtue and vice and the "whole of reality" (121-122).

What Gadamer describes in his reading of *Letter VII* with respect to the revelation of philosophical understanding relates to what was presented earlier in our reading of Gonzalez (1999): The untiring movement back and forth (the rubbing of each against the other – *tribomena pros allella*) through the four ways of knowing facilitates the manifestation of the Being of virtue to the understanding in a way where the play of language allows truth to *manifest* despite the inability to describe or define it via the "four ways," allowing it to *show* itself, to intimate itself in a way that defies proof of a discursive nature. This notion is expressed clearly by Gadamer (1980) when he argues that what is "mere talk, nothing but talk, can, however untrustworthy it may be, still bring about understanding among human beings – which is to say that it can still make human beings human" (123).

It is possible to understand the manifestation of philosophical understanding as it "barely" appears to those engaged in the dialectic process of "rubbing" the four ways together, if we look at what Gallagher (1999) and Gonzalez (1999) state about the meaning of "transparency" in language along with

the etymology of the word "rub," or tribein, in the Greek. "Language in use," states Gallagher, "is like windowpane that, without calling any attention to itself, or getting in the way of our vista, allows us to focus on the objects outside" (114). The words, as it were, fade into the background so that the meaning shines forth, becomes clear, or the center of focus. Now, Gadamer (1980) has informed us that in the dialectic, in the "rubbing" of the four ways, the words (and subject matter) to "assert themselves as whatever particular thing they are instead of fading out of view," and this indicates language fails to achieve the proper level of transparency in order to let the "thing itself" move to the fore and be seen in its self-showing, i.e., in full disclosure or knowledge (105). If we consider what Gonzalez (1999) states about the Greek term "tribein," as a process that has the "sense of a vigorous rubbing that wears things down," or wears them away, it is possible to understand the phenomenon of truth-happening in Plato's Letter VII: As we move through the four ways, rubbing each against the other, there occurs a "wearing down" of the language, so to speak. The more vigorously we seek to clarify the names, images, and propositions we employ, the more the words/images begin to wear down and away, they recede, as it were, and a partial and momentary "transparency of language" occurs, and the fleeting light "truth" shines forth, like a *flash of light*. This form of philosophical understanding is difficult to communicate, it "cannot be expressed in words," as Plato tells us. It is possible to link the "fifth way" of knowing the "thing itself" with the moment when language reaches its full potential as a transparent medium for truth However, this is not to indicate that this form of "truth" transcends language usage entirely, or that it is a moment when truth is fully disclosed with no dissembling or concealment, because but this moment of truth-happening also occurs in and through the "vigorous" use of language, which is always grounded ontologically in finitude and radical human limitation - self-presencing is at all times a simultaneous selfconcealing.

This entire process embodies Plato's educative effect of the dialectic, and, as we have seen, this educative effect is located in this play of language, in terms of "language games." And according to Gadamer (1989), "Language games exist where we, as learners – and when do we cease to be that? – rise to the understanding of the world" (490). Gadamer's (1980) entire reading of Letter VII demonstrates that the so-called "epistemic" reading of the excursus into Plato's philosophical moments of dialectic "is not a theory of knowledge at all but a theory of teaching and learning" (987). The result of this play of language is expressed by Davey (2005) in terms of the "conversation (dia legestai) and the dialectic use of question and answer," which serves as the means through which what is "beyond words (die Sachen)" is brought forth "in language" (190). This play of dialogue "allows the subject matter to become more itself and the participants to become different to themselves," and this is precisely the transformative and formative aspects of philosophical hermeneutics that facilitates human transcendence in the process of Bildung and Bildung haben (192-193). This is because there is no "fixed universal answers" to the questions that Socrates and the others are asking, and they keep the "subject matter open by remaining in the play of language," which means, as related to our reading of Fried (2005), that the preproductive and reconstructive phases of the zetetic dialectic always lead back to the initial phase of deconstruction, but do so in a way wherein the participants have been changed by the encounter with the fleeting glimpse, or flash, of the understanding of virtue (193). "It is not that the question of what a thing is left hanging in the balance," writes Davey, "but rather what a thing or subject matter is resides in the balance, shimmers as it were between the disclosed and withheld," and it is "precisely the relations of the language-world that create the space for a subject matter [the logoi] to reveal itself' (194). The play of language opens possibilities for us that are already present and structured from within language, and the play carries us outside of who we are in the moment. The presentation and alteration of linguistic meaning produces both the constitution of meaning and the instability of meaning, in this play we do not move from one pre-constituted world to another, rather through the back-and-forth movement of play our existing world is transformed anew in moments when the unfamiliar is integrated into that which becomes meaningful, and "this integration not only transforms the unfamiliar – it transforms the familiar" (Gallagher, 1999,

Zuckert (1996) further punctuates this notion of education when arguing that Plato demonstrates in "each and every dialogue, the pursuit of wisdom has a formative or educational effect" (72). This

educational effect is expressed within the first principle of philosophical hermeneutics and the interpretation of any and all texts. Through the attempt to come to an agreement about the nature of the subject matter, as in the case of the Platonic dialectic, which represents the search for defining the Being of virtue and interpreting its meaning for our lives, we must "recognize the integrity and the dependence of the view point of the other" (90). The human's self knowledge is impossible outside of the dialecticdialogic relationship with others, and, "given the unpredictable nature of those relationships, a hermeneutic awareness of self must entail an awareness of its ontological dependence upon language and its speakers" (Davey, 2005, 231). This includes the understanding that the pursuit of the Being of virtues, such as the "good," does not entail a search for a transcendent and transcendental ideal that lies at a complete ontological remove from our factical dealings with others as beings immersed in the world. The "Good," as Gadamer (1990) reminds us, "is not something that man has (as Agathon = 'good' commonly means, to begin with) but a manner of his very being" (105). The "good" of human life "does not confront us as a norm located beyond," but rather in terms of the "truth of human being and conduct" (209). This is why we must assess the dialogues in terms related to Gadamer's understanding of hermeneutics, "in terms of a lived conversation," and avoid envisioning the dialectic as producing "the logic of an abstract argument" (Hyland, 2004, 170).

As Plato states in Letter VII, "If knowledge is to be gained at all through dialectic, its source must be found on one's own nature or disposition" (Plato, 1997, 344 a4). Thus, there must be a selfreflexivity bound up with the philosophical understanding into virtue that represents the "truth of the thing itself." Philosophical understanding, as a form of self-knowledge, always entails "the process of becoming different to ourselves," i.e., "we do not merely encounter the different but become different to ourselves because of the encounter" (Davey, 2006, 16). All understanding emerging from hermeneutic interpretation as an educative process already presupposes a counter-striving relationship with the other, for as Davey writes, "Self-awareness is, it is argued, not a precondition of being-with-others. Rather, its emergence demonstrates the fact that we have already entered into such a relationship" (16). We have already encountered this notion in Gonzalez (1995), which is represented in the practice of the dialectic and the praxis associated with a "good life" in communion with others. We encounter the "good" in the very way in which the participants in the dialectic inquire into themselves as they seek to uncover the Being of virtue, and this form and practice of questioning "shows us what it means to be good" (167). We must be aware, however, as Gonzalez (1999) points out, that due to the nature of this understanding of the virtue, considering it is not an object of knowledge per se that might be acquired through a definition, in light of the radical limits of human finitude, the understanding of the virtue "cannot be such as to enable us to fully master moral contingencies and eliminate moral risks" (39).

To conclude, Gallagher (1999) amplifies the connection between Plato's notion of paideia and the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer: "Learning does not consist of stumbling upon an immediate, absolute, and satisfying knowledge of something. Learning is rather a searching for understanding within a context" (195). In a way that relates to the foregoing discussion of philosophical understanding, Gallagher highlights the threefold distinction between theoretical, technical, and moral knowledge in order to show that for Plato, only the latter is associated with *phronesis*, which in Gallagher's reading is akin to the genuine philosophical understanding that we have discussed. In Gallagher's analysis of the Meno, he relates the three forms of knowledge to Meno's store of memorized definitions, the technical knowledge of the sophists, and the "self-knowledge" that is developing in the discourse between Socrates and Meno, which is "intimately linked with phronesis and thinking for oneself," and is a form of "knowledge which one can learn but not be taught" (198). This learning without direct instruction is precisely what formal education lacks, and hence cannot be an example of learning to better oneself morally: "Rhetoric, as practiced by Sophists such a Gorgias, is a collection of purely formal techniques used to impress those who listen. As formal technique it does not manifest moral involvement and concern for student, subject matter, or truth" (198). This does not for Plato represent an ideal education, and Gallagher draws a comparison between Plato's paideia and art, and states that "if we define art (a term that in English once signified 'learning') as a practice that manifests such moral concern, then for Plato education has more to do with art than with formal, unconcerned *techne*" (198).¹⁷

Concluding Thoughts: Against the Socrates-as-Teacher Model in Education

Adler's view of Socrates and his method of "teaching," along with other doctrinal advocates of Plato's philosophy, has its roots in an Aristotelian reading and interpretation of Plato's dialogues, which as Hyland (2004) argues, amounts to "transformation of the drama of the dialogues into the language of concepts" (175). The Socrates-as-teacher" model that formal/institutionalized education has adopted resembles more what Gadamer (1986) refers to as "new paideia," or a form of "education" consistent with the sophists claims to "teach virtue," which adopts an epistemological model that "boasts of being a techne" (50). As shown, philosophical understanding of the Being of virtue does not have this character. Plato's authentic notion of education does not take the form of the systematized state education of the philosophical kings, rather, it is located in the very discussions that Socrates has with interlocutors as they pursue philosophical understanding of the virtues. Gadamer (1986) clearly recognizes this when describing the dialectic, with the focus on its dialogic component, in terms of expressing the "Doric harmony of logos and ergon that gives Socrates' refutational enterprise its particular ethos" (44). As I have suggested, the goal of the dialectic as practiced by Socrates is educative, is formative in the following manner, and we arrive at this conclusion by bringing together the analyses of both (Gonzalez, 1995, 1999) and Gadamer (1980, 1986): Through the rigorous process of questioning and refutation, the individual's soul is developed, one's disposition (hexis) is transformed through the understanding of and in relation to the Being of virtue, which occurs always in community, through the joint venture of those involved in the dialectic practice. For both Socrates and Plato, as Hyland (2004) points out, philosophy "must and can be understood as a way of life," wherein the virtues are embodied and play themselves out in praxis (169, emphasis in original). Hyland views the dialectic as a practice through which the "concretization of the virtues" occurs, and

the crucial consequence of this existential concretizing of the good concerns our knowledge of it. For since it is not itself an abstract idea or even an object, knowledge of it cannot be a techne, cannot be any sort of technical or epistemic knowledge, but somehow a *lived* knowledge (181, emphasis in original).

¹⁷ Although I have focused throughout on Gadamer's hermeneutics and interpretations thereof, I think there is a way to escape the charge of "textualism" in hermeneutics due to the manner in which I have highlighted the play, conversation, and lived experience of participants in the dialectic as ultimately "learning" from their encounter with the understanding of virtue manifesting in through the discursive moment between the "four ways" of knowing. Gallagher (1999) makes this important point about "textualism" in hermeneutics because it is crucial if we are to grasp the implication of the focus, or object, of the interpretive processes when considering the potential for a "universal philosophical hermeneutics" to make a legitimate "contribution to educational theory" (319). When hermeneutics is textualized, and this occurs from Schleiermacher through Gadamer (to some extent), it focuses on all forms of interpretation as being comparable to or identical with the internal "reading" of a text: "Such a construction reduces all interpretation to the form of reading. Insofar as textual interpretation becomes the model for all interpretation, hermeneutics introduces a distortion into the very nature of interpretation, namely that the interpretational process is construed as merely an internal operation of reading. Textualism, in its various forms and degrees, simply reinforces the exclusion of explication – a pedagogical dimension of interpretation" (330). The manner in which I have presented the "reading" of Plato's dialogues characterizes hermeneutics as a process of learning about the virtues over simply a method of "reading" the virtues, which although "one important from of educational experience," is not "the paradigmatic form" (330). Herein, I have attemtd to demonstrate that philosophical understanding, explication, and application work in tandem in the learning and development of the participants engaged in dialogue. For this reason it is possible to say that the philosophical understanding granted by the process of hermeneutics is itself pedagogical, it is a "kind of educational experience," which might offer something of a model or "universal paradigm" for hermeneutics rather than one focused exclusively on the interpretation of "texts," for it "provides a model broad enough to include textual conversation as well as conversation and play," and thus frees hermeneutics from the charge that (1) it is only oriented toward textual interpretation and (2) the process of understanding through interpretation is limited to and associated with an interior, and hence, subjective, occurrence.

Gallagher (1999) labels Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics "moderate hermeneutics," and places this form of interpretation in contention with the "conservative hermeneutics" of E. D. Hirsch's (1984) "cultural literacy" program. Briefly, and this will be detailed below, *Scholar Academic* ideology, of which Hirsch is an advocate, embraces a "conservative" approach to education and hermeneutics, wherein the origin of curriculum knowledge and its crucial relation to "objective reality" are represented in the following manner:

The process of obtaining curriculum knowledge [according to Scholar Academic ideology] requires that (a) something exist in objective reality, (b) the academic discipline discover it an sanction its existence by including it in the discipline itself, (c) the developer select it for inclusion in the curriculum from the discipline, and then (d) it can be *transmitted* into the student's mind [...] Scholar Academics accept the duality between subjective reality within each individual's mind and the objective reality outside each person's mind. However, *only knowledge that can be externalized, objectified, and impersonalized within objective reality is of worth* [...] It also means that personal information that cannot be communicated without losing its point, such as feelings, of competence, power, self-esteem, or love, *is not considered to be worthwhile curriculum knowledge* (Schiro, 2008, 40-41, my emphasis).

Adler's (1984) "Great Books Program" also emerges from the Scholar Academic education philosophy. Importantly, based on the above quotation, we immediately encounter three aspects that set off Scholar Academic education from the more original form of Paideia-Bildung work within Plato's dialogue as presented herein. First, knowledge is such that it can be transferred (as a techne) into the mind of the student, and thus we have not only a very specific epistemological view we also have a distinct, and traditional, view of the student-teacher relationship/hierarchy. Scholars obtain knowledge and then disseminate it to both teachers and students, and in addition, within the teacher-learner relationship, "the teacher is viewed as a transmitter and the learner is viewed as a receiver of the discipline's knowledge," this is because the "the source of knowledge lies outside the source of the student and is actively transmitted to the student by the teacher" (Schiro, 2008, 42-43). Secondly, because Scholar Academic believes that if knowledge is valuable, and therefore worthwhile in the curriculum, it must lend itself to "objective" standards for evaluation which "rests on a correspondence theory of knowledge: the extent to which what is in one's mind reflects the discipline is the extent to which one possesses knowledge," and evaluation, and then student ranking, "is determined a posteriori through norm-referenced tests, the results of which are determined after students have been evaluated" (48). Lastly, the form of knowledge, which we have termed philosophical understanding, which is more a form of self-knowledge-in-praxis, which is non-propositional in nature, is precisely the type of "knowledge" that the Scholar Academic curriculum eschews. It would be impossible to "standardize" and measure in quantitative fashion, for it simply resides at a unique epistemological level.

Importantly, for our purpose, what Schiro states echoes our initial thoughts about "Socratic" discussion and the nature of the informed, knowledgeable teacher will prove enlightening, for despite "Maieutic" dialogue appearing to be an important and novel "teaching" method, which might be derived from Socrates' philosophy in the Scholar Academic curriculum, it is the case that the "academic" uses the method to communicate knowledge that he or she is already in the possession of, for "whether the major emphasis in on knowledge being impressed upon mind," through methods of didactic transmission, "or on mind giving meaning to knowledge presented to it," as in the case of Socratic questioning, "the source of knowledge lies outside the student and is actively transmitted to the student by a teacher" (43). Davey's (2005) differentiation between philosophical hermeneutics as Bildungsprozess and formal and essentialist forms of education relates directly to what we have indicated about the uniqueness of philosophical hermeneutics as a learning process through dialogic-dialectic practice, for the form of education that philosophical hermeneutics entails "involves the achievement of a qualitative level of hermeneutic engagement rather than the acquisition of formal knowledge per se" (62). Due to the finitude bound up with all instances of constructed, interpretive understanding, it becomes questionable that "philosophical hermeneutics could ever universally privilege what would always be a particular set of norms and prejudices" (62). As might be related to both Adler's "Great Books" program and Hirsch's notion of educational "Cultural Literacy," the tradition and canon that is received by philosophical hermeneutics "does not entail endorsing a specific body of works that are supposedly superior to others" (62-63). Rather, the "canon that is defended" within the practice of philosophical hermeneutics "celebrates not a specific body of works but a body of questions, namely those subject matters around which human understanding locates it possibilities" (63).

This type of "faux-Socratic" teaching, and hence learning, cannot be accurately compared with the authentic and original mode of education that transpires within the dialogues of Plato. Since this essay represents a speculative philosophical analysis, I have avoided attempting in any way to offer what might be read as "hermeneutic principles" for teaching or curriculum-making, and perhaps it is the case that such a model of Platonic dialectic-dialogue as presented would in fact be impossible to formalize and implement in this day and age of high-stakes testing and hyper-accountability, i.e., the gilded age of standardization. Indeed, Gadamer (1992) recognizes that in the university the philosophical practice of "living with ideas" has been lost irretrievably, and the students' experience amounts to exercises in rote didacticism, namely, the teacher is a "role model" who exclusively stands "behind a rostrum" (53). The actual purpose of the university as described by Humboldt, according to Gadamer, has been bastardized and reduced to a bureaucratic entity divided against itself where students focus only on "attending lectures or completing good essays on small research assignments for a seminar" (53). There is a gaping chasm between the "Socratic method" as it is employed in Scholar Academic Curriculum and the manner in which Socrates practiced and lived the dialectic, which is expressive of a life that "begins and ends enclosed by finitude," but is also "punctuated by transcendence" (Fried, 2005, 172). By means of our comparison between the two forms of dialectic we also reveal the marked difference between contemporary education and the original and non-formal education (Bildung/paideia) as instantiated and embodied by Socrates, here both education and philosophy, or we might say, "educative-philosophy," is a difficult, arduous, and precariously uncertain. The real Socratic education transpiring in the dialogues could never be restricted to the classroom, for it is "lifelong, ongoing task, one that when properly understood, far from causing us despair, opens us to the richness of the human condition – suspended as it is between finitude and transcendence" (172).